

January 17, 1963

Dr. Seymour Cohen
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
Department of Biochemistry
Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania

Dear Seymour:

We have an opening with some rather demanding qualifications, on which I hoped you might be able to help me find just the right person. I have outlined the general framework of our department on the enclosure. The slot we must now fill is "comparative biochemistry". As you yourself would be an ideal prototype, I thought you could help better than anyone. The facilities we have available could well accommodate an appointment to an associate professorship, perhaps even a full professorship if the program could integrate especially well with the other activities. A younger man with real perspective would be best of all, if he can be identified.

The most perplexing aspect of this search is how we can improve our performance in our exobiology program. A minor but necessary aspect of this is the supervision of some development work in connection with instrumentation for life-detection, but this would be almost entirely delegated to research associates. More important is the development of an interest in the problem, and familiarization with the opportunities, to be able to supply real supporting judgment to the numerous decisions that must be collectively made in such work. We do have an unusual opportunity to take advantage of some incisive engineering for ultra-analytical instruments, and the situation would of course be most exciting to a researcher who, not necessarily a gadget-builder himself, sees the importance of new methods for advancing the solution of basic problems. It is, however, rather difficult to convey all of the subtleties of the channels that can link together the different programs in the department, and I would undertake this responsibility myself if you have any suggestions for people with the right qualifications. Most important is the combination of a high order of technical skill with a zeal to understand the underlying unity of terrestrial, and further, of cosmic life. Any of a number of experimental approaches will serve such goals; and needless to say an effective scientist must make a well-focused choice in his day-to-day program.

We are now planning new laboratories to be occupied about October, 1964, and this is the final "deadline" we should meet in making this appointment. However, we would prefer to make it effective as soon as possible, and have some reasonable facilities for it now.

Cordially,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

cc - Dr. Seymour Cohen (10-100)